

Chapter 5

Combat Camera Assets and Activities

COMCAM documentation is an essential battlefield information resource that contributes to decision-making at strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This chapter discusses the theater COMCAM Company, theater COMCAM VI officer, joint COMCAM operations, and the Joint COMCAM Center.

THEATER COMCAM COMPANY

5-1. The mission of the theater COMCAM Company, IAW Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3205.01 and DOD Directive 5040.4, is to provide imagery to the NCA, JCS, military departments (MILDEPS), and the unified combatant commanders to support their operational and planning requirements during world crises, contingencies, exercises, and wartime operations. Those requirements include SA, PA, information warfare, mission assessment, and legal documentation. The company accomplishes its mission by providing COMCAM support to joint, unified, and US Army operations and exercises.

5-2. The company can provide land, airborne, and airmobile operations. When deployed as a whole, it supports the warfighter at all echelons in a fully manned theater of war. When necessary, its modular design facilitates tailoring support packages for lesser regional conflicts (LRCs), small-scale contingencies (SSCs), and other operations in the spectrum, such as peacekeeping (PK) and humanitarian relief operations. The company can deploy on short notice to support any level of combat force projection down to the maneuver brigade. It can also operate in a joint operational environment as part of, or in support of, a joint COMCAM organization.

5-3. The theater operational commander determines collection requirements based on local mission objectives and is the release authority for all COMCAM imagery. Once the in-theater operational requirements are satisfied, cleared products are immediately forwarded to the Joint COMCAM Management Team (JCMT) for use by the unified commands and released to the Joint COMCAM Center. The complete cycle from acquisition to receipt by the Joint COMCAM Center must occur within 24 hours for the collected imagery to remain a viable decision-making tool for the leaders at the NCA, JCS, and MILDEPS.

5-4. The COMCAM Company provides digital and conventional still or video photography, conventional film processing, digital image transmission, video editing, limited airborne and air assault capabilities, and limited night vision imagery acquisition. When deployed, all COMCAM forces are under the operational control of the supported unified commander; however, command of these companies is kept within Army channels, with joint operational control exercised through the appropriate component commander.

5-5. The COMCAM Company has limited capability to process weapons system video (WSV). WSV shows the impact of ordnance on targets and captures immediate secondary effects that may not be ascertainable by subsequent reconnaissance overflights of the same target. WSV becomes a valuable source of material for timely and accurate BDA and intelligence at the theater level, PSYOP within the international arena, and PA at the national level. COMCAM units usually do not handle reconnaissance and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) imagery. UAV requirements and missions to gather reconnaissance imagery are assigned to other forces.

5-6. The mission performed by the COMCAM Company is not meant to replace user-owned and -operated VI systems, such as those used specifically for intelligence, medical, prisoner documentation, and PSYOP. The company will augment functioning VI systems only when the systems cannot provide the required support.

CAPABILITIES

5-7. The COMCAM Company provides the following to the theater:

- Staff planning, control, and supervision of the operations of the company, to include any augmenting personnel or materiel assets.
- COMCAM equipment maintenance by on-site repair, replacement, or evacuation to civilian contractors.
- Liaison to supported units, JCMT, and other service COMCAM elements.
- Capability of landing by parachute when organized to support airborne operations.
- Establishment, operation, and maintenance of COMCAM facilities supporting the theater and subordinate tactical command post headquarters. This includes—
 - COMCAM editing for the electronic processing of digital still and motion imagery acquired by organic documentation teams, WSV, or other COMCAM field units located in the theater area of operations (AO).
 - Operating support facilities to provide tailored still and motion media products, graphics products, narration support, and video reports on short suspense.
 - Presentation and exploitation of visual imagery in support of operational requirements.
 - COMCAM platoons to support operational requirements and provide continuous COMCAM documentation for historical purposes, to include ground and aerial documentation/acquisition of visual imagery. Transmission is accomplished via the most reliable transmission means available; that is combat net radios (CNRs), single-channel tactical satellite (TACSAT) radios, local area networks (LANs), or Defense Switch Network (DSN) and commercial telephone lines.

OPERATIONS

5-8. The COMCAM Company is low-density, high profile, and rapidly deployable. Its response capacity is equal to the forces it deploys with, and it trains with those units when possible. Elements of the company supporting airborne operations are jump qualified. Elements supporting forced entry and rapid deployment missions can embark on short notice with limited aircraft space. When fully deployed, elements are dispersed over the entire theater of operations and are capable of 24-hour operations. Figure 5-1 shows an example of a rapid deployment mission.



US Air Force photo by TSGT Varhegyi

Figure 5-1. Rapid Deployment Mission

5-9. The company is trained and equipped to operate in all climates, adverse weather, chemical warfare environments, and under severe operating conditions. It can provide field operations with all mission forces within the military service and employ equipment with compatible technical formats and film types to ensure interoperability when deployed. In special operations or small task force situations, soldiers may operate in forward areas in direct combat with opposing forces. All personnel remain qualified on both pistol and rifle, and the company maintains mobility stocks of these weapons to deploy with soldiers.

5-10. Upon receipt of the tasking order, the company is attached to the Theater Signal Command (TSC), and subordinate elements are detached to deploy with their supported unit. COMCAM elements work for, and at the direction of, the J3, G3, or S3, as appropriate. Company leaders and planners integrate operations with the component battle staffs at all levels. They are required to have a TOP SECRET clearance to ensure the necessary access for this crucial staff coordination. All other company personnel are required to have a SECRET security clearance due to the sensitive nature of materials.

5-11. Upon acquisition, COMCAM imagery is moved to editing/processing facilities and then to the requesting command by the fastest means available. Within the theater/tactical environment and between the theater/tactical environment and the Joint COMCAM Center and/or sustaining base environment, this can include electronic movement via battlefield/theater communications systems (TACSAT, CNR, the Area Common User System [ACUS], or the Defense Information Systems Network [DISN]). The company also uses nonelectronic means, such as messengers, official mail, and military air to move and distribute COMCAM products.

5-12. The operational commander is the release authority for all collected COMCAM images. This authority can be delegated to the appropriate J3 or G3 or further delegated to the J2 or G2. The local command must release the images before they can be transmitted out of the theater. Images must be transmitted back to the Joint COMCAM Center within 24 hours to meet the mission requirements of the NCA, JCS, and MILDEPS.

SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

5-13. At the theater level, the COMCAM Company is attached to the TSC and is collocated with the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) G3. The theater Army (TA) element provides food service, health, legal, religious, finance, personnel and administrative services, supply, supplemental air transportation, and support for transmission of VI on data-capable communications lines across the theater and back to the sustaining base. The TSC provides communications-electronics (CE) maintenance support.

5-14. At the corps and division levels, the COMCAM element is attached to the headquarters. The platoon headquarters is collocated with the appropriate corps/division G3. COMCAM teams are under the operational control (OPCON) of the brigade and battalion headquarters and are collocated with the appropriate unit S3. The associated Army element provides food service, health, legal, religious, finance, personnel and administrative services, supply, supplemental air transportation, and support for transmission of VI on data-capable communications lines across the corps/division and to the next higher headquarters. The corresponding signal command provides CE maintenance support.

STRUCTURE

5-15. The modular design of the COMCAM Company facilitates support package tailoring. The six modules are the company headquarters, the platoon headquarters, the theater operations section, the editing squad, the documentation squad, and the documentation team. Figure 5-2 shows the structure of the theater COMCAM Company.

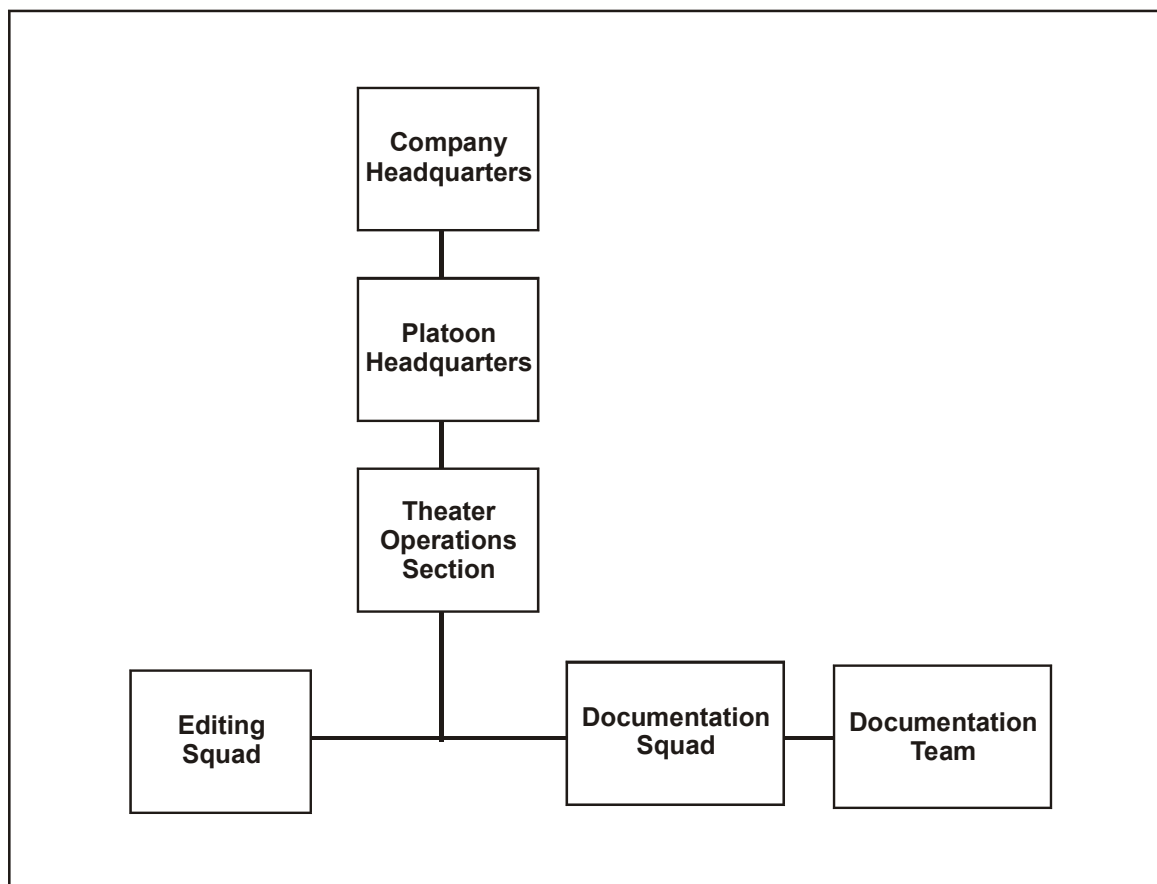


Figure 5-2. Theater COMCAM Company

Company Headquarters

5-16. The company headquarters provides command, control, and supervision of the operations and activities of assigned platoons and ensures they execute their joint, unified, and Army VIDOC missions. The company headquarters also provides control and coordination of COMCAM VIDOC missions in the theater/joint AO to include COMCAM VI staff planning. The company headquarters provides limited administrative and logistical support for all assigned personnel, to include procuring the operational, logistical, and battlefield information services required to accomplish the mission. COMCAM administrative and logistical support includes the following activities:

- Coordinating the unit's supply activities, to include requesting, receiving, storing, issuing, accounting for, and preserving individual, organizational, installation and expendable supplies, and equipment.
- Issuing, receiving, maintaining, securing, and controlling the unit's weapons and ammunition.
- Training, advising, and supervising the unit on the operation and maintenance of chemical equipment.
- Executing the unit's personnel and administrative functions.
- Maintaining the unit's maintenance management system and prescribed load list (PLL).
- Maintaining the company's environmental control unit, vehicles, and generators.

Platoon Headquarters

5-17. The platoon headquarters provides command, control, and supervision over COMCAM missions and elements within the corps and division area. The platoon leader serves as the corps/division COMCAM VI staff officer.

Theater Operations Section

5-18. The theater operations section plans, coordinates, and supervises the operations of all theater, corps, and division-level COMCAM documentation. It supports missions while distributing associated products to support the mission requirements of the ASCC G3. It develops and distributes annexes to operations orders (OPORDs) and operations plans (OPLANs) and ensures the execution of COMCAM VIDOC by assigned platoons. The theater operations section is responsible for coordination/liaison among theater J3, ASCC G3, corps, and division COMCAM support elements. It exercises direct control over the documentation and editing squads assigned to the section.

Editing Squad

5-19. The editing squad provides still and video editing for finished products at the division, corps, and theater levels. It tailors still and motion media products, graphic products, narration support, and video reports. It also edits and archives video and photographic productions, processes 35mm conventional slides/prints, and arranges for presentation of visual imagery to support the operational headquarters.

5-20. The editing squad operates the Still Photography Editing and Processing System (SPEPS) and the Motion Video Editing System (MVES).

Documentation Squad

5-21. The documentation squad provides on-site day and night COMCAM still and video imagery and rough video editing in support of the theater, corps, division, and below. The documentation squad supervises and directs the three documentation teams in the squad.

Documentation Team

5-22. The documentation team provides day and night COMCAM still and video imagery. The imagery supports the units throughout the theater and down to the maneuver battalion level.

COMMUNICATIONS

5-23. The theater COMCAM Company passes classified and unclassified orders and command and operational information at the theater, corps, and division levels over CNR networks. At each of these levels, COMCAM elements operate an internal frequency modulation (FM) net for C2 and operate within the supported unit's IO net. The company has organic radios to support this requirement.

5-24. The company passes classified and unclassified orders, command and operational information, imagery, and data throughout the theater over the ACUS network. It uses telephones for basic staff coordination and to pass products and imagery around the battlefield. Due to geographic separation, each company module has its own organic user-owned voice and automation equipment; however, it relies on the supported unit for transmission support. Figure 5-3 shows a network diagram.

THEATER COMCAM VI OFFICER

5-25. The COMCAM Company commander is dual-hatted as the theater COMCAM VI officer on the Theater Signal Command-Army (TSCA) G6 staff at the ASCC. As the theater COMCAM VI officer, his responsibilities include—

- Advising and providing information to the commander and the G3 on COMCAM capabilities and operations.
- Making recommendations on the capabilities, limitations, and employment of COMCAM assets to support the mission objectives.
- Planning and recommending COMCAM missions, and monitoring execution of decisions.
- Preparing, updating, and maintaining COMCAM annexes to plans and orders.
- Processing, analyzing, and disseminating COMCAM information, to include submitting COMCAM products and information to the appropriate staff element.
- Identifying and analyzing problems that might affect or be affected by COMCAM.
- Conducting staff coordination with the command, other staff officers, and sections at the higher, lower, adjacent, and supporting echelons of command and corresponding joint staff elements.

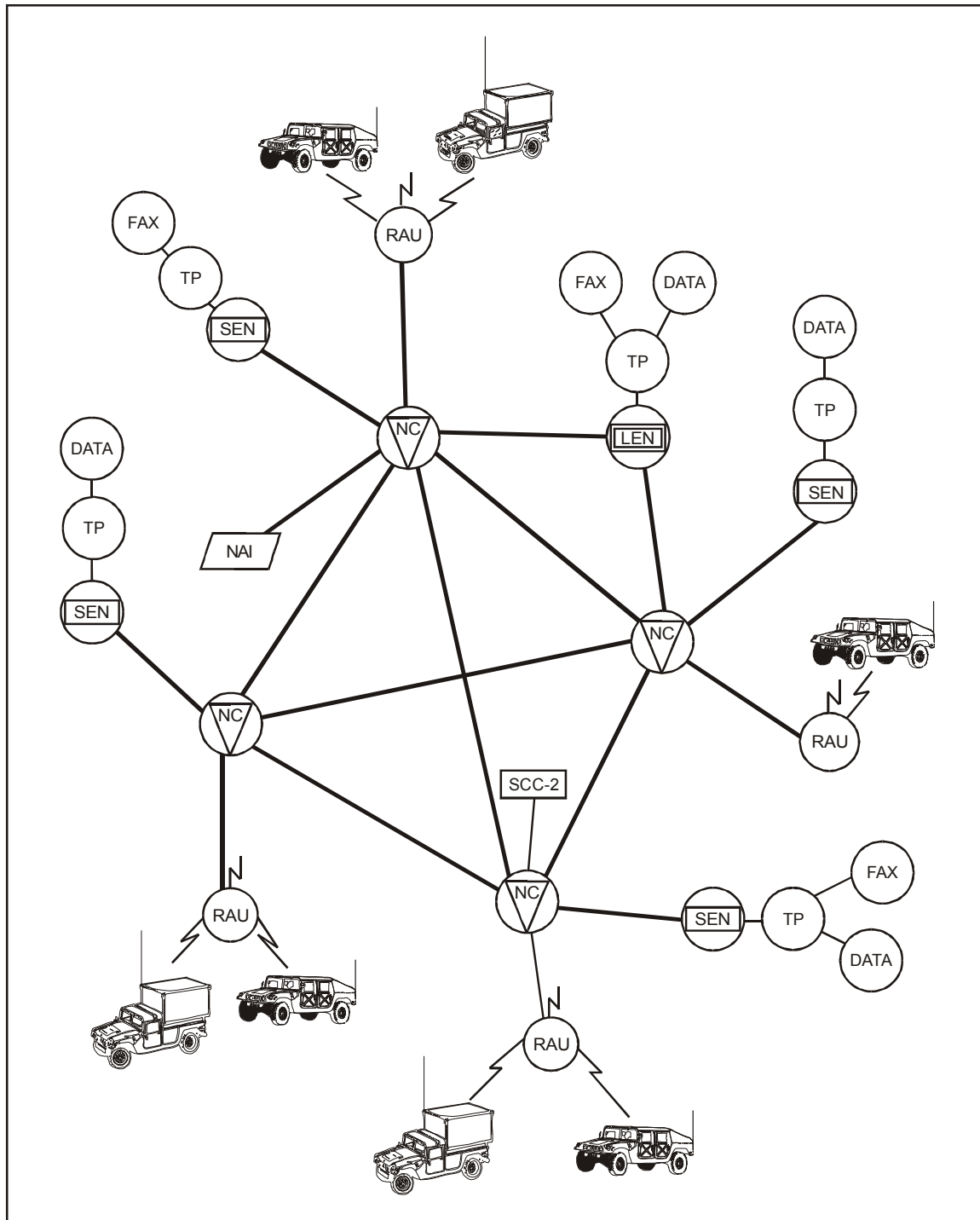


Figure 5-3. Network Diagram

JOINT COMCAM OPERATIONS

5-26. Each military service has COMCAM forces that are trained and equipped to support forces in a combat environment. They can provide still photo and motion media support. COMCAM forces can be tailored to fit any requirement. All COMCAM force members possess at least a SECRET security clearance.

5-27. The Chairman of the JCS, the Joint Staff, or any specified or unified commander may task COMCAM support. Tasking is normally component-specific (Army COMCAM is tasked to document Army activities); however in a joint environment, joint COMCAM forces can be formed to document all aspects of an operation.

5-28. COMCAM products cleared by the operational commander can be forwarded directly from the theater of operations to the Joint COMCAM Center in the Pentagon for further distribution to the JCS, DOD, NCA, other sustaining base activities, and agencies and for the archive.

JOINT COMCAM CENTER

5-29. The Joint COMCAM Center is the Pentagon's central reception and distribution point for still or motion imagery of current US military operations. The center distributes COMCAM imagery to the NCA, JCS, MILDEPS, unified combatant commands, defense agencies, and other DOD components simultaneously. The Defense Visual Information Directorate operates the center.